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House Majority Leader Makes Statement on Civil Justice Subcommittee Passing Proposed Committee Bills on Judicial Accountability and Judicial Transparency

Tallahassee, Fla. – Florida House Majority Leader Carlos Lopez-Cantera (R-Miami) today issued the following statement regarding the Civil Justice Subcommittee’s passing of the Proposed Committee Bills (PCBs) on Judicial Accountability and Judicial Transparency. Judicial Accountability addresses merit retention votes for appellate court judges, and Judicial Transparency reforms the Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC). The Civil Justice Subcommittee also discussed a proposal to create two co-equal Supreme Courts, the Supreme Court of Civil Appeals and the Supreme Court of Criminal Appeals.

“The Legislature has a duty to look at where our current system of government is falling short and propose changes to make it better. These two PCBs bring greater accountability and transparency to the judicial branch.

“The PCB on Judicial Accountability improves accountability in the judicial branch by increasing the percent approval needed for appointed appellate court judges from a simple majority to 60 percent in a merit retention election. This change will allow election outcomes to greater reflect the opinions of Florida voters and make the process of merit retention elections more meaningful.

“The PCB on Judicial Transparency, which passed unanimously, increases transparency in the judicial branch by making investigative files on judges open and available to public scrutiny by Florida voters, while still preserving confidentiality during the investigation stage. Like the legislative and executive branches of government, which are subject to public records laws, this legislation allows for more open and transparent government in the judicial branch.

“The current process of conducting state post-conviction reviews in death penalty cases is plagued with significant delays. The Florida Supreme Court has made no progress to improve or streamline this process, which postpones the administration of justice. Creating two subject

specific Supreme Courts would increase efficiency and allow for specialization, increasing the efficiency in the administration of justice.”

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